

hearing, we now know that President Biden pulled troops from Afghanistan against the advice of his military commanders and was less than truthful after the fact when asked about their recommendations.

General Milley and General McKenzie's testimony made clear that they had both recommended that the United States leave a small contingent of U.S. troops in the country—advice that the President ignored.

Thanks to President Biden's ill-considered withdrawal from Afghanistan, here is the situation we now find ourselves in. The Taliban is once again in control of Afghanistan, and just in case anyone thinks this is a kinder and gentler Taliban, let's look at the facts.

The Taliban has stocked its government with terrorists, including former inmates of Guantanamo Bay and members of the Haqqani Network, a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization with a number of members on the U.N. Security Council's sanctions list. Many of the members of the new Taliban Cabinet are on the U.N. Security Council's sanctions list, and the government is well stocked with pre-9/11 Taliban leaders, the same leaders who allowed Afghanistan to serve as a refuge for al-Qaida.

So that is the new Taliban government. What is it doing? Well, in mid-September the Taliban announced that secondary schools would reopen for boys. There was no mention of girls. The Taliban official announced that women would not be allowed to play any sport that might show their bodies. Women are being excluded from the workplace.

In Helmand province, barbers have been barred from shaving or trimming beards.

In one city, the body of an alleged criminal was hung from a crane in the city square, while in Kabul, Taliban members brutally flogged a man accused of stealing a phone. And a senior Taliban leader announced the return of executions and the cutting off of hands as punishment.

A kinder, gentler Taliban this is not.

And this formerly somewhat ragtag group is now the possessor of a significant amount of U.S. military equipment, including weapons, combat vehicles, aircraft, and surveillance equipment, much of it acquired from the Afghan National Security Forces.

And while the President might like to blame the Afghan forces for disbanding, the truth is he bears part of the responsibility for their collapse. For years, the United States trained and equipped Afghan troops to fight the way that we do, including a reliance on close air support and a sophisticated intelligence-gathering operation. And the limited number of U.S. troops still in the country were playing an essential role—providing intelligence, logistics, and air support the Afghan military needed.

Then the President pulled all remaining U.S. support almost overnight. It is

no surprise that in the wake of that, the Afghan military quickly collapsed. There is no question that there were preexisting problems in the Afghan forces, including fraud and corruption. But the Afghan military was playing a key role in combating the Taliban and terrorist activity in Afghanistan, and it was the abrupt withdrawal of U.S. support that precipitated its collapse.

Thanks to the President's withdrawal, our ability to combat terrorist activity in Afghanistan and the region has been significantly degraded, as General Milley's testimony yesterday made clear. As the Washington Post reported:

Al-Qaeda remnants are in Afghanistan and interested in growing, Milley said, but the United States no longer has military or intelligence assets on the ground to keep tabs on the militants.

The withdrawal makes it "much more difficult for us to conduct intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance," Milley said, including missions to locate militants.

That, again, is from the Washington Post.

In short, there is every reason to expect that Afghanistan will once again become a haven for terrorists. In fact, because of the huge number of weapons and equipment we left behind, it is probably more accurate to say that Afghanistan will likely become a terrorist superstate. Meanwhile, as I said, our ability to effectively detect and defend against emerging threats in Afghanistan has been significantly diminished. There is no intelligence or counterterrorism strategy that will fully offset the loss of American boots on the ground.

U.S. military and intelligence personnel still in the country, in coordination with our local partners, were playing a critical role in providing intelligence on evolving terrorist threats in Afghanistan and throughout the region. That intelligence network is now gone. We no longer have human intelligence on the scene.

We no longer have any bases in-country from which to conduct operations. Future missions will have to be staged from distant bases or seaborne assets, complicating the mission and significantly increasing our response time.

That is not just an inconvenience. By compromising our ability to respond to terrorist activity, this withdrawal is endangering our country. For 20 years, we have managed to prevent another major terrorist attack on U.S. soil. How long is that going to last when Afghanistan is once again a haven for terrorists and our intelligence and response capabilities have been permanently weakened?

I haven't even mentioned the damage that the President's bungled withdrawal has done to our relationships with our allies. The President, who, supposedly, was set to restore America's standing in the world, is instead presiding over a national embarrassment that has left our allies wondering whether or not we will keep our commitments. We have damaged our credi-

bility with our allies. It is clear that Russia and China are enjoying our humiliation on the world stage, not to mention the way that our withdrawal has empowered our terrorist enemies.

Ceding Afghanistan to the Taliban and its terrorist allies has not exactly made us look like an intimidating foe. It wouldn't be surprising if terrorists are thinking that all they have to do in future battles is wait us out until we give up and withdraw.

I am sure the President would like to put his chaotic Afghanistan withdrawal behind him, but there is a big problem with that—namely, the fact that his administration still has U.S. citizens left behind in Afghanistan. The administration has been hazy on the details, either because it is not sure how many American citizens are left or because administration officials don't want to give a number. But it is clear that there are still a number of Americans stuck in Afghanistan.

And then there are the tens of thousands of Afghans we abandoned—Afghans who were affiliated with the U.S. Government or worked with the U.S. military and whom we promised to protect. These individuals and their families are currently in grave danger.

My office continues working to evacuate a number of green card holders and at-risk Afghans to safe countries in the region, and several of the individuals we are working with have received death threats from the Taliban.

And while there are dedicated State Department and Defense Department personnel coordinating with veteran-led groups to evacuate Afghan citizens, the administration is still—still—struggling to develop a clear path for getting them out of the country.

We still need to learn more about the chaotic U.S. evacuation, which resulted in the deaths of 13 U.S. service-members and scores of Afghan civilians. But one thing is very clear: President Biden made an ill-considered and disastrous decision when he chose to withdraw our troops on an arbitrary timetable, and the Afghan people are currently suffering the consequences.

And should Afghanistan once again become a terrorist haven, as seems likely, our country could also pay a deadly price. We have to make sure it doesn't come to that.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, more than 3 months ago, ProPublica began publishing a series of stories. These stories were based on what they have described as "a vast trove of Internal

Revenue Service data on the tax returns of thousands of the nation's wealthiest people, covering over 15 years."

I have spoken about this apparent leak or hack on IRS data before. During the August recess, POLITICO Pro's Morning Tax, writing about ProPublica, noted that "it's been almost two-and-a-half months since it ran its first story on that leaked tax data and, though the leak is perhaps the worst in the IRS's history, the government has yet . . . to say anything publicly about how it happened."

As absurd as that statement is, it is also accurate, and I will speak about the accuracy of that. The Biden administration has not said what happened regarding perhaps the worst leak or hack in the history of the IRS.

Now, in doing my constitutional duty of congressional oversight, I have sent letters to the IRS and to the Attorney General and to the FBI, who have provided an embarrassingly small amount of information in response to my letters.

The first ProPublica story was published on June 8 of this year. On June 11, I joined Leader MCCONNELL and Finance Committee Ranking Member CRAPO on a letter to Attorney General Garland and FBI Director Wray. Days later, on June 16, I sent a letter with other Judiciary Committee members asking more detailed questions.

It took almost 2 months for the Department of Justice to respond to these letters by sending me two copies of the same form letter in response to my letter. Dated August 10, one of the letters contains an apparent typo in that it purports to be in response to a letter "dated June 6, 2021."

Given that ProPublica began publishing stories about this on June 8, if I was clairvoyant enough to write a letter on the leak 2 days earlier, I would already know what really happened. The fact that the Department responded to two different letters with the exact same form letter and couldn't correctly refer to my letters shows a lack of diligence that is not unique to this matter.

In response to a different letter I sent with Senator CRAPO to the Commissioner of the IRS, Rettig, I received a recent response that states: "We do not yet have any information concerning the source of the alleged taxpayer information published by ProPublica."

Now, the IRS Commissioner is advocating for Congress to pass an expansive new reporting requirement for the IRS. Every bank account over \$600 is going to be sent to the IRS for their review and use if they want to go after the taxpayers. If Commissioner Rettig doesn't even know whether the ProPublica information came from the IRS, how can he assure us the IRS can properly protect this new information that they want the Congress to pass? I don't think he is going to be able to convince anybody of that.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the response I have received

from the Department of Justice and the IRS be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,  
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS,  
Washington, DC.

Hon. CHARLES E. GRASSLEY,  
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary,  
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR GRASSLEY: This responds to your letter to the Attorney General and the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) dated June 6, 2021, urging the investigation and prosecution of the disclosure of confidential taxpayer information as reported in the media. We are sending identical responses to the other Senators who joined in your letter. We appreciate knowing of your concerns about this matter.

As you may be aware, the Secretary of the Treasury testified recently that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is looking into the matter as is the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA). She further stated that the matter had been referred to the Treasury Inspector General, as well as the Department of Justice.

The Department is committed to taking investigative steps as appropriately predicated and authorized, carefully reviewing referrals we receive, and, as appropriate, considering relevant and admissible evidence in light of the Principles of Federal Prosecution. See Justice Manual 9-27.000. While we understand how important this issue is to you, longstanding Department policy will preclude us from providing your office with any information related to this matter outside the public record.

We hope this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact this office if we may provide additional assistance regarding this or any other matter.

Sincerely,  
JOE GAETA,  
Deputy Assistant Attorney General.

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Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I call on Attorney General Garland, FBI Director Wray, and Commissioner Rettig to take the apparent leak or hack of taxpayers' information very seriously and cooperate with our constitutionally mandated responsibility to conduct oversight to see that the laws are faithfully executed.

The protection of taxpayers' information provided to the IRS is of critical importance to the basic functioning of government. Determining the source of the information published by ProPublica should be a top priority for our Nation's tax enforcement Agency and, allegedly, premier law enforcement entity. I intend to continue working with Ranking Member CRAPO of the Finance Committee and anybody else to continue looking into this matter. I hope that we are able to resolve how any confidential taxpayer information was obtained from the IRS and those responsible are held accountable.

#### TAXES

Mr. President, on another matter, President Biden and congressional Democrats have repeatedly pledged not to raise taxes on anyone earning under \$400,000. They have said it so many times that it has begun to sound like a broken record. The thing is, when someone feels the need to repeat a claim over and over, it is likely that they are trying to pull the wool over our eyes. That is exactly the case with the Democrats' tax pledge.

According to an analysis by the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation, there isn't a single income group completely spared from the Democrats' tax hikes. In other words, it is going to hit a lot of people with incomes below \$400,000 a year.

And I know my colleagues know what the Joint Committee on Taxation is. It is an expert group that studies the Tax Code and the impact of tax changes. But, for the public at large, this is a nonpartisan group of people that do a very fine job of saying how changes in the Tax Code will affect whomever they are supposed to affect. Not those making under \$400,000, not those making under \$100,000, and not even those making under \$10,000 will be guaranteed not having their taxes increased, as the President promised.

So going back to the Joint Committee on Taxation analysis, over 12 percent of taxpayers with incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000 would see a tax increase. Thirty-five percent of those earning between \$100,000 and \$200,000 would pay higher taxes. You can't raise taxes on small businesses and other job creators—these entrepreneurs—without hitting the middle class.

Economic studies show that when you raise taxes on businesses, anywhere from 20 to 70 percent of that tax